

NUTRITION SERVICES DIVISION MANAGEMENT BULLETIN		No. 01-112
TO:	All School Nutrition Program Sponsors County Superintendents of Schools Diocesan Superintendents of Schools	ISSUE DATE: September 2001
ATTENTION:	Food Services Directors	
SUBJECT:	Verification – Focused Sampling	
REFERENCE:	Title 7 Code of Federal Regulations (7 CFR) Section 245.6a	

This Management Bulletin clarifies the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) verification requirements for free and reduced-price school meal applications. There has been some confusion regarding the number of household applications that must be verified when using the focused sampling method.

By December 15 each year, school nutrition program sponsors must select a sample of their approved free and reduced-price meal applications and verify benefit eligibility. Sponsors must verify either a **random sample** or a **focused sample** of applications on file as of October 31. **Random sampling** is the random selection of three percent of all applications for verification. **Focused sampling** is more complex. The following is guidance provided by USDA on how to conduct focused sampling:

How many applications must be verified under focused sampling?

The school nutrition program sponsor must verify:

1. A total of 1 percent of all approved applications, **or** 1,000 applications, whichever is less, of applications based on household income; **and**
2. A total of 0.5 percent of applications approved based on a CalWORKs, Food Stamp, or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) case number, **or** 500 of such applications, whichever is less.

At a minimum, at least one application must be selected and verified. When calculating sample sizes, all fractions or decimals must be rounded **upward** to the next whole number. An application for two or more children counts as one application in calculating the sample size.

How is the 1 percent calculated?

First, the sponsor must determine the **total** number of approved free and reduced-price meal applications (applications based on household income **and** applications based on a case number) on file as of October 31. If the sponsor chooses to begin the verification process before October 31, the number may be projected and, if necessary, adjusted after October 31.

Next, multiply the total number of the approved applications by 0.01; the result is the number of applications with household income information which the sponsor must verify.

For example, a sponsor has a total of 4,438 approved applications on October 31; 3,367 of the applications have income information and 1,071 have a case number.

$$\begin{array}{r} 4,438 \\ \times 0.01 \\ \hline 44.38 \end{array}$$

Because partial numbers must be rounded upward, the sponsor must verify 45 applications with household income information.

How are the applications based on household income selected for verification?

The 1 percent of total applications must be selected from among applications that listed household income within \$100 monthly (or \$1,200 annually) of the guidelines for free or reduced-price eligibility for a household of that size.

If more applications meet this criterion than are needed for the sample size, the sample must be selected using any equitable method that ensures that the same households are not selected each year.

If not enough applications meet this criterion to fulfill the required sample size, the remainder must be selected from applications whose incomes are closest to the free and reduced-price thresholds.

If the total number of income applications is smaller than the required sample size, then **all** income applications must be verified.

How is the 0.5 percent of applications based on a case number calculated?

First, determine the number of applications on file on October 31 that were approved because the household included a current case number. As with the income application calculation, this number can be projected before October 31 and, if necessary, adjusted after that date.

Next, multiply that number by 0.005. Using the same example as before, a sponsor with 1,071 applications giving CalWORKs, Food Stamp, or FDPIR case numbers, the calculation would be:

$$\begin{array}{r} 1,107 \\ \times 0.005 \\ \hline 5.535 \end{array}$$

Rounding the partial number upward, the sponsor must verify 6 applications that have a case number. The verification sample is to be selected by any means that is equitable and ensures that the same households are not selected each year.

To summarize the example provided – the school nutrition program sponsor with a total of 4,438 approved applications (3,367 income applications and 1,071 with a case number) would have to verify 45 applications with household income information and 6 with a case number, for a total of 51 applications.

You can find detailed guidance on “Focused Sampling” in the USDA’s *Eligibility Guidance for School Meals Manual*. If you need a copy of this manual, please contact the Resources and Information Management Unit at (916) 322-5836.

If you need further assistance, please contact your Nutrition Services Division Representative directly, or the Field Services Unit at (916) 323-4558 or (800) 952-5609.

Marilyn Briggs, Director
Nutrition Services Division
Assistant Superintendent of Public Instruction

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, or religion.

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD).